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ABSTRACT

This tipsheet reports that the first series of books written especially to help prepare teachers of minorities and the disadvantaged were general books of readings. Among these is "The Disadvantaged Learner" by Staten Webster. Over 600 pages in length, it is loosely organized around three themes: knowing the disadvantaged, understanding the educational problems of the disadvantaged learner, and educating this population. Among the most useful of the books of readings is "The Disadvantaged Child, Issues and Innovations," by Joe L. Frost and Glenn R. Hawkes. The editor's introduction to the section on psychomethodological considerations places the teacher in the most significant role. Probably the most successful effort to move away from the potpourri of a book of readings and develop a consistent point of view is "Tactics for Teaching the Disadvantaged," by William F. White. The essence of this book is the chapter which discusses the teacher as a conditioner of emotions. Techniques or systems for developing skill in emotional modification are presented. A basically dangerous book, written for the preparation of teachers of minorities and the disadvantaged is "Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged--A Rational Approach" by Kenneth R. Johnson. "Preparing to Teach the Disadvantaged," by Bruce W. Tuchman and John L. O'Brien, was developed by a group of knowledgeable people invited together by the authors. (Author/JM)

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Teacher Preparation for the Minority and Disadvantaged

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Prodded by the dramatic social and legal events of the 1950's and the early 1960's, the educational establishment came to the sudden realization that a substantial number of its products were not meeting the demands of the larger society. That larger society indicated that it either could not, or would not, sustain such products. Whether one wishes to blame the product deficiency on lack of skills, inadequate socialization, or personal conflict is irrelevant. The fact remains that the product of the schools was, and is, currently seen as deficient. Initial attempts at tightening the quality control mechanisms within the educational structure only managed to intensify the problem.

A cursory examination of those learners who were not meeting the design specification indicated that most were from minority groups, i.e., black, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American or American Indian,¹ or from among the children of the poor. The question immediately became, "What is there in common among the minorities and the disadvantaged that causes them to be unable to meet the school's product specifications?" "What is there in the up-bringing, cultural set, language habits and/or patterns, value systems or genes of these non-performing students that causes interference with the learnings mandated by the school system?"

Coincidentally perhaps, when the learning problems of the minorities and the disadvantaged became evident, the entire system of teacher training in the United States came under attack. Lynn, Koerner, Conant and others were pointing out the weaknesses of the content and the inappropriateness of the organization of professional training. While not ready to admit that all was wrong, teacher-trainers could not ignore the evidence of the educational catastrophe among the minorities and disadvantaged. Nor could they ignore the literal cry for "help" coming from those teachers engaged in teaching minority and disadvantaged learners.

Having been made aware of the problem, and hearing the cry for help, teacher-trainers gathered some data and were given a satisfactory testing ground for all of their hunches. Fairly massive federal funding for training of teachers of the disadvantaged was supported by Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Section 309C of the Adult and Vocational Act, and, finally, the Education Professional Development Act. All of the early training efforts, and much that has continued, was *ad hoc*. Little was really known by educationists, however, about the minority and disadvantaged, the schools serving these learners or the teachers in those schools.

The initial type of book written for the teacher of minorities or disadvantaged developed directly from this *ad hoc* status. The earliest volumes, composed of selected and edited readings, were the result of conferences or teacher-training institutes. These books were soon followed by more systematic attempts to present a total view of the research and opinions concerning the education of the disadvantaged.

In reviewing this literature, one should move quickly beyond the volumes published as a result of conferences or specific, funded teacher-training institutes. There is little doubt that published materials of this type, unprecedented heretofore, met an immediate need of the profession. However, assuming that the legitimate objectives of the specific conference were met, i.e., exploration of a problem area or the assessed needs of a given group of participants, the general usefulness of such publications is obviously minimal over an extended period of time.

The first series of books written especially to help prepare teachers of minorities and the disadvantaged were general books of readings. Among these is *The Disadvantaged Learner* by Staten Webster.² Over 600 pages in length, containing 73 selections, 3 poems, 3 forwards and a preface, the book is one of the best of what can almost be considered an educational genre. *The Disadvantaged Learner* is loosely organized around three themes, knowing the disadvantaged, understanding the educational problems of the disadvantaged learner, and educating this population.

The Webster volume's very existence, when little else was available, was in itself a contribution but, unfortunately, a seriously flawed effort. In the preface, Webster states that the book would make use of the socio-cultural approach to increased understanding of, and effectiveness with, the disadvantaged learner. This concern with the cultural dimensions of minority group status is clearly a significant one. Bringing the structural tools and the research of the sociologist to bear upon the learning problems of the disadvantaged is one of the few positive aspects of the educational efforts of the last twenty years. However, having defined that as his framework, Webster is unable to find adequate data from sociologists. The volume relies greatly on the anecdotes and general reactions of a group of social observers and educational practitioners. The material written by sociologists is either terribly condensed or generally descriptive. These problems connected with the author's lack of central purpose makes for considerable confusion. While observations of experimental programs are

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included, few usable criteria for program analysis are identified. Minute examples of the cultural behaviors of Puerto Ricans, blacks (northern, southern, rural and urban), Appalachian whites, Japanese, Chinese and migrants are given, but the reason for the teacher to deal with all this, is not. Thus, the current usefulness of Webster's work in preparing teachers of minorities and the disadvantaged is limited.

Among the most useful of the readings is *The Disadvantaged Child. Issues and Innovations* by Joe L. Frost and Glenn R. Hawkes.³ The editors of this volume have used very personal, and very concrete, criteria for selecting their material. They suggest that although there has been much written about minority and disadvantaged learners, there are many students of education who have had no personal and little intellectual contact with the issues. Secondly, it is argued that intuitive and reactive teaching approaches are inadequate for the disadvantaged. Only the empathetic, skillful, objective professional can provide necessary and sufficient learning experiences. The third selection criterion contends that compensatory education is a process made necessary by a pseudo-democratic system. Discrimination against minority groups and the disadvantaged is the fundamental cause of illiteracy. This discrimination must be exposed and then recognized as the major force in the educational process. As a fourth criterion, the editors recommend that the theories of several professional educators be synthesized to illustrate a single direction for educational programs for the disadvantaged. All but the last of these criteria are ably applied to the vast literature.

The excerpts describing the disadvantaged and the consequences of deprivation are strong, dramatic and wide-ranging. The novice teacher gets a sampling of Carmichael discussing the ghetto, Schrag describing Appalachia and Tabin explaining his concern for migrants. The effects of deprivation on the physical and psychological person are made clear. Whether the reader is being reacquainted or introduced for the first time to these disgraces, he is bound to find these excellent selections compelling.

Frost and Hawkes present a clear picture of the confusion generated by Arthur Jensen, J. McVicker Hunt and their professional colleagues and question the actual usefulness to be gleaned from these theoreticians. Engelmann states that the teacher must "assume that she can change the concept repertoire of the child regardless of his developmental stage."⁴ These theories, plus some program descriptions, set the stage for a most difficult task, i.e., distilling theoretical structures to permit a synthesis leading to a singular programmatic direction. The portion of the book concerned with psychomethodological development is where this synthesis is achieved.

The editor's introduction to the section on psychomethodological considerations places the teacher in the most significant role. Described as the power figure in the classroom, she is told to use this position to make crucial decisions about the assessment, content and instructional techniques in what is called the "structure-process approach."

The structure in this model is based upon educational objectives (Bloom), intellectual evaluation and structure (Piaget and Guilford) and teaching strategy (Hewlett). The process dimension, a much more weakly defined dimension, seems to rest upon human development (Gesell) and instruc-

tional prescription (Hunt). A chapter by Frost redefines these constructs and reports some research based upon their application.

Although the editors state that their structure-process modality is but one possible approach, the real import is that *it is a structure*—something that has been lacking heretofore throughout the literature. It is unfortunate that this most important portion of the book appears only in the introduction to one section and as one of the thirty-eight excerpts presented. It is to be hoped that a more clearly focused and elaborated statement will soon appear.

It is this combined problem of synthesizing the data about teacher training, focusing upon the learning problems of minorities and disadvantaged and stating a sound program that is so difficult to handle successfully. Among the very few volumes that have attempted to do so is *Tactics for Teaching the Disadvantaged* by William F. White.⁵ Facing the massive problems of developing a consistent point of view, this book is probably the most successful effort to move away from the potpourri of a book of readings.

If one keeps in mind the polarity of professional positions on such diverse issues as genetic relationships in determining intelligence, the role of the community in school decision making, or the success of any particular program, one can see the problem. The organizing theme used by White is "the teacher." He states that the research indicates that the only clear factor among the in-school variables which makes a difference is the teacher. White, after a definitional introductory chapter, clearly indicates his intention to organize his data around this theme. As one of three assumptions, he states, "the teacher is the essential component in the learning process of the child."⁶ White then proceeds to present an extremely useful analysis of both direct and indirect teacher styles. Using data from Lewin, Lippett and White, Ryans, Amadon and Flanders, Bereiter and Englemann, Montessori and others, alternate prototypes are presented as realistic alternatives for the teachers. At this point, the second organizing principle is introduced. Assuming the teacher to be the major component in the learning process of the child, the major task of the teacher is to condition the emotions of the child. White states that, "teachers of disadvantaged children should style their lessons upon modifying the emotions of children rather than communicating knowledge."⁷

The *sine qua non* of this book, then, is the chapter which discusses the teacher as a conditioner of emotions. Beginning with a short historical treatment of Pavlovian conditioning, White moves through Skinnerian theory to the work of Mower and of Bugelski. With Bugelski's statement that we can only learn emotional responses to stimuli as an anchor, White develops teaching strategies for dealing with the emotional conditioning of disadvantaged children and for re-directing inappropriate self-concept. Stressed throughout is the role of the teacher. White states that the "most powerful stimulus for emotional arousal of students in any classroom is the personality of the teacher."⁸

The remainder of this volume presents techniques or systems for developing skill in emotional modification. A discussion of race and power attempts to show some of the causation of emotional distress manifested by some disadvantaged students, and a discussion of social behavior measurement indicates methods of locating emotional distress. A

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section on information-systems shows the teacher how to organize and control his data so that emotional modification can take place. A short chapter on pre-service and in-service training of teachers of the disadvantaged calls for a systems-approach to teacher training which places sensitivity and compassion as well as verbal and quantitative ability high on a priority list of teaching behaviors.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with White's argument for emotional modification, the book does provide a helpful and useful synthesis of data. It also provides a consistent scheme for the preparation and training of teachers of the disadvantaged.

Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged - A Rational Approach by Kenneth R. Johnson⁹ should have been a strong and useful book for the preparation of teachers of minorities and the disadvantaged. Written by a single author who immediately decries the "faditis" of teaching the disadvantaged and the temptations inherent in funded programs, the book sets objectives of (1) helping teachers acquire some understanding of the different groups represented among the disadvantaged, (2) offering suggestions and techniques for teaching the culturally disadvantaged child, and (3) stimulating thought and discussion among teachers.

Unfortunately, none of these objectives is accomplished. Indeed, the book is not strong or useful; it is dangerous. The book alternates between vague generalizations, exhortations and blatant stereotypes. Examples from the chapter on "Characteristics of the Disadvantaged Child" and from one on "The Teaching Relationship" will illustrate my point. After an extended discussion of such items as the poor self-concept, rural background, aspirational poverty and aggression (a discussion in which not a single citation is given or one bit of data presented), the following general effects of the environment are given: "lack of awareness of order or organization," "lack of respect for property," "poor attention span," and "disrespect for cleanliness."¹⁰ In a discussion of learning styles the following "factors that hinder the disadvantaged" are given: "different language development," "inability to distinguish between noise and meaningful sound," "inability to delay gratification," and "inability to sustain attention."¹¹

The author suggests that the teaching relationship depends, in part, upon understanding the parents. He argues, "For example, culturally disadvantaged pupils speak non-standard English or a foreign language and they have a value system different from that of the dominant culture, a poor self-concept, low aspirations and a poor understanding of success. Their parents necessarily share these characteristics."¹²

In recommending that teachers consider parents, Johnson states, "Because literacy is a new phenomenon in many disadvantaged families, parents have a poor understanding of its significance in a modern society....Most disadvantaged parents don't really have a basic understanding of the learning process."¹³

The suggestions and techniques provided for teachers are fortunately vague and generalized. The specifics to be derived from such a lofty position could be disastrous. The teaching appropriate for the stereotyped disadvantaged child described in this text can only perpetuate the ineptness of the current system. The reflection of elitism and charity provided has become a main force in the recruitment and training of teachers of the disadvantaged. It is certainly less than helpful.

A novel method for developing a volume with the specific objective of designing a consistent scheme for the preparation of teachers of minorities or the disadvantaged is used by Bruce W. Tuchman and John L. O'Brian. *Preparing to Teach the Disadvantaged*¹⁴ is the result.

The authors invited a group of knowledgeable people together to describe the characteristics of disadvantaged learners and to jointly design a program for preparing teachers. Some of the group were distinguished scholars representing anthropology, sociology and psychology. Some were educationists representing guidance, vocational education and the education of the disadvantaged. A third portion were school administrators from schools with disadvantaged learners.

The cast of characters immediately defines the strengths and the weaknesses of the book. A group of concerned and able people deliberately bringing the strengths of their disciplines to plan a teacher preparation program rests upon the strengths of the disciplines. The data presented by the anthropologists is extremely useful. (Certainly, anthropology and sociology are disciplines that have a major contribution to make in the preparation of teachers but, unfortunately, they have been resources used far too seldom.) The psychological dimensions of the proposed program rest rather heavily upon J. McVicker Hunt, David P. Ausubel and Jack McClellan.

Despite the authors' contention that the text is for use in the preparation of all teachers of the disadvantaged, the inclusion of sections by vocational educators seems to determine the real direction of this book. The descriptions of school programs by their respective administrators have the strength of reality and weakness of generalization.

Part III of the Tuchman and O'Brian volume presents a specific program for preparation of teachers as designed by the group. Descriptions of other programs are added as options.

The program proposed has three significant strengths. The first and probably the most important is that it exists. The profession can only improve the preparation of teachers of minorities and the disadvantaged as models are proposed, analyzed and changed. Without models, this cannot happen.

Within the proposed model, the other two major strengths appear. It has become more and more apparent that an understanding of socio-cultural foundations and the skills necessary to determine those foundations must be in the repertoire of teachers. Tuchman and O'Brian recognize this need and include proposals for seminar objectives and learning experiences to accomplish it. Secondly, the locus of teacher training is moved from the teacher training institution to a shared position with the school. The trainees in this program have three school experiences, one of which is extensive.

Unfortunately, like the proverbial camel that was put together by a committee, the program has no clear guidelines. The supporting theories do not lead directly to the operational program. If one is very aware of the literature and has very carefully read the first four chapters, one can occasionally say, "Ah huh! That's where that comes from!"

One can also see the committee negotiations in the model. The inclusion of vocational educators and the omission of methodologists and curriculum specialists is clearly shown in the in-school component. The authors try to compensate for this by including everything in the section of the bibliography on curriculum, but even that weakens the section. It is unfortunate to find seminar objectives that will "sensitize the

students to..." or "help students to understand and appreciate the life of..." or to "narrow the cultural gap between..."

In summary, the books reviewed are adventuresome. They present material which is badly needed. But teacher preparation is more than a grouping of opinions. Minority and disadvantaged students are more than an educational problem. These two massive aspects of 20th century society must be viewed with intellectual binoculars. That job remains to be done.

Footnotes

¹It is interesting to note that the four groups most commonly included in the word minority are physically identifiable. However, another physically identifiable group, i.e., Orientals, are seldom included in such a definition.

²Staten Webster (ed.), *The Disadvantaged Learner*. (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1966).

³Joe L. Frost and Glenn R. Hawkes, *The Disadvantaged Child*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970).

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 267

⁵William F. White *Tactics for Teaching the Disadvantaged* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971).

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 40

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 79

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 90

⁹Kenneth R. Johnson, *Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged*. (Palo Alto: Science Research Associates, 1970).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 31-32

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 34

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 111

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 113

¹⁴Bruce W. Tuchman and John L. O'Brian, *Preparing to Teach the Disadvantaged*. (New York: The Free Press, 1969).

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 4

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